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THE INFLUENCE OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS¹

BESIDES discharging all the other functions of a university, the State University must meet the responsibilities that come to it as the head of the public-school system of its commonwealth. These responsibilities are grave and numerous. That secondary education is dependent upon elementary—that higher education is dependent upon secondary and elementary, is apparent to all; but few grasp clearly the fact that elementary education is dependent upon secondary and higher, and that secondary education is not less dependent upon higher than it is upon elementary. The public school system cannot thrive if limitations of extension be imposed upon it. A paralytic stroke comes upon it at the point of limitation. Restrict it to elementary education, and apathy follows, at least in the seventh and eighth grades. Limit it to elementary and secondary education, and weakness appears in the upper years of the high schools. Let it end with the four years of the college courses, and ailing in the colleges appears. The higher the limitation is placed, the less deadly the result; but wherever it is placed, whether high or low, limitation brings some measure of disaster. Every student of educational history must have noted the wonderful revival of college education in the United States since the Johns Hopkins University introduced serious graduate work. This work has practically no limit.

This fundamental idea that the lower education is not less dependent upon the higher than the higher upon the lower has been clearly seen by some illustrious men. The modern educational movement in Germany, France, and the United States is due in no small measure to the influence of Prussia. Exhausted by disastrous wars with the first Napoleon, Prussia redeemed herself in half a century through the regeneration of her school

¹An address given at the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, St. Louis, Mo., March 1900.

system. The work of redemption was begun by Wilhelm von Humboldt. His plan embraced the reorganization of the public-school system from top to bottom; but the first step was to found the University of Berlin. He realized that the redemption of elementary and secondary education was impossible without a great university at the head of the public-school system.

In the opinion of the writer, one of the wisest educational thinkers that our country has produced is Thomas Jefferson. Through a magnificent public-school system he aimed to exalt Virginia and after her the other states of the Union. But his first step was to found the University of Virginia. His plan was in all essentials similar to that of Humboldt which it preceded in time. Prussia executed Humboldt's plan in its fullness; but Virginia mutilated the plan of Jefferson. No secondary or elementary public schools were established. Moreover the University of Virginia as founded was but a fragment of the institution of which Jefferson dreamed. Side by side with better education, he advocated the abolition of slavery.

But returning from examples to the doctrine that they exemplify, let me repeat with emphasis that the public-school system cannot be maintained in thorough efficiency in any part, unless it be maintained in thorough efficiency in every part, from the kindergarten through the graduate studies of the university.

The influence of a university is conscious and unconscious. The influence which it exerts unconsciously, it exerts also inevitably. Whether it concern itself with the schools below it or not, a great institution of learning must exercise a powerful influence upon these schools. Until the administration of President Eliot it is doubtful if Harvard gave much attention to secondary and elementary education, as represented in the public-school system. Yet the unconscious and unintentional influence of Harvard was immense. The same may be said of the University of Virginia in the South. This unconscious influence is exercised by strong private institutions quite as effectually as by state institutions. It is the inevitable influence of a great establishment of higher learning. This unconscious influence a state university should unquestionably exercise. This it can

do only by becoming great. Therefore it is under obligation to the schools below to become morally and intellectually as great as possible. In increasing the depth and extent of its own instruction it is blessing unawares all the schools below.

But a state university, to fulfill its duty, must exert upon the schools below it a conscious influence also. While private institutions are not debarred from doing this, they are not nearly so well fitted for it. The fact that it is the head of the public-school system gives the state university opportunities that have to be acquired by private colleges. Moreover this fact justifies state institutions in expending money to widen the circle of their conscious influence, whereas private institutions would naturally hesitate to encounter the outlay. For a liberal outlay of money, be it understood, is indispensable. Perhaps this paper would be most useful if, without discussing further the general proposition, I point out some ways in which state universities may best exercise conscious influence upon the schools below them.

In the first place, in justice to secondary education, the university should not maintain a preparatory department. It is idle to quibble on this subject. A university that maintains a preparatory department does deep wrong to every secondary school in its commonwealth. The best thing it can do for itself and for the commonwealth is to strangle its preparatory department. Having had some experience in this matter, I am aware of the difficulties. The maintenance and improvement of state institutions is dependent in large measure upon the good will of the people. Nothing succeeds with the people like success.

In popular estimation the highest evidence of success is a large enrollment. It takes some courage therefore to abolish preparatory courses and to demand for admission to every department a high-school diploma. If this be done suddenly, the inevitable result will be a large reduction in enrollment. Numbers of students that apply for admission must be sent back home. These malcontents spread dissatisfaction in their respective neighborhoods, which brings great peril to the institution. No wise man would in a year abolish preparatory courses and require for admission to every department of the university a

high-school diploma. This would be courting disaster. But there is no reason why within a space of ten years any university may not abolish its preparatory courses and so raise the standards in every department, that at the end of the decade good high-school training shall be necessary for admission. If I may enforce the assertion out of our own experience, let me say that the Missouri University maintained a preparatory department for more than fifty years. In the fall of 1893, one year was dropped; the next fall another year; and the process of raising the requirements for admission to the various departments, including law and medicine, has been going on ever since. More than two thirds of the work has been completed. I hope to see it all completed by the fall of 1901. The longest period that it could reasonably require, would end in the fall of 1903.

The whole system of public instruction should be articulated. Naturally the university should approach first the high schools. These, when articulated with the University, become agents for the articulation with themselves of the elementary schools about them. Every high school should sustain to the elementary schools about it a relation similar to that which the university sustains to the high schools. This proposition will not be disputed. It may be profitable perhaps to examine the various ways of articulating the high schools with the state universities.

The first institution that attempted this was the University of Michigan. When a high school wanted to be articulated, a committee of the faculty was sent to examine it, the school paying the expense of the journey. So great is our debt to Michigan for discovering the idea, that we can readily forgive certain crudities in this method of articulation. To require a school to pay the traveling expenses may be equitable, but it is scarcely progressive. To send a committee of the faculty traveling over the country is scarcely commendable. If the committee examine schools often enough to become expert in the work, the professors might as well resign their chairs. If they take good care of their work on the campus, they will not examine schools often enough to make their judgment worth much. For many years I directed the work of articulation by

committees of the faculty, but paying traveling expenses out of our own treasury. I found it eminently unsatisfactory. A professor, profound in his specialty, knows too much and too little to be a good examiner. Sometimes he demands of the high schools what would do honor to the college. Sometimes he underrates them, believing that good work in his subject cannot be done except in a college. He may know his specialty, but the question arises whether he knows high schools. The University of California has pursued this method with more vigor than any other institution in America. Its committees, large in size, have traveled thousands upon thousands of miles. They are thoroughly attached to the method, but I venture to say that it is unfortunate. In the last six months Michigan has abandoned this method, and, following the example of Minnesota and Missouri, has appointed an Examiner of Schools. In Minnesota the examiner is paid by the state, but he travels under the direction of President Northrop. In Missouri an examiner has been maintained since the fall of 1894. He is appointed and paid by the university. He travels eleven months of the year visiting, during the regular session, high schools, and in the summer vacation, teachers institutes. All his expenses are paid by the university and he travels under the direction of the president. Many objections have been brought against examining schools through a single man. It has been declared that no one could be found sufficiently learned to measure a high school properly in all its branches. With us in Missouri the examiner must pass upon the instruction in Latin, Greek, French, German, English language and literature, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. The high schools teach often other things, but these are the only subjects in which we examine. If it be asked where a man can be found capable of judging all these things, let me remark that the examiner does not have to teach all these subjects. It is by no means impossible to get a man of liberal college education and of wide experience in school work that is fully capable of measuring the instruction of a school in all these subjects; although it might be difficult to get a man thoroughly qualified

to teach them all. It goes without saying that when defects are found in a school they are reported to the local authorities. To do this effectually, without stirring up enmity, requires much tact. In Missouri the examiner always meets the school board. When the way is open he delivers a public lecture to the people of the town, sometimes illustrating it with the stereopticon. The burden of his lecture is, or ought to be, the present status of secondary education in the commonwealth. He tells of the admirable equipment that the neighboring town has for laboratories, of the fine library that he found in another town, of the new building in a third town, of how liberally a fourth town taxes itself, and so on. Thus, by praising this good feature in this school, and that in another he appeals to local pride in behalf of the local high school. He is called an examiner. It would be better to call him a high school builder. He sends to the university a carefully prepared report on every school visited. These reports are carefully bound in a volume each year.

What authority should the State University have over the high schools? In my opinion it should have none. In New York the Board of Regents exercises considerable control over all secondary education. In Minnesota the Board of Education, consisting of three persons, largely controls the public high schools. The chairman of this board is President Northrop. The high-school teachers are not allowed in New York to grade the papers of the students applying for graduation. This is done through the board. Now to my mind this necessarily implies distrust of the schools and exaltation of that very questionable thing known as examinations. The teachers of the high schools are trusted to instruct the pupils but not to examine them. If they are competent to do that which is greater, should they not be held competent to do that which is less? In Missouri the university has no control whatever over secondary schools, public or private. We should regard the acquisition of such power as a serious obstacle to our work. We have now the privilege of visiting these schools, of helping them, of advising them, of quarreling with them in gentlemanly manner,

and of loving them sincerely. We have the privilege of spending thousands of dollars per annum in promoting their interests, chiefly through the agency of the examiner and the summer school. This is sufficient for our purpose. More would be a hindrance.

Every state university should maintain an unquestionably good summer school for teachers. It is a blessing to the schools for their teachers to come, at least six weeks in the summer vacations, to a university to prosecute their studies. There is no reason why good work done in the summer school might not count toward a degree. In every subject there should be courses of two grades—the lower including those given in good high schools, and the upper courses of university grade. Teachers in the lower schools want to prepare themselves sometimes to teach in the high schools. Teachers in the high schools often want instruction in subjects which they do not teach, but in which they wish to become proficient. The courses of secondary grade should be perfect models of what such courses should be in the schools. The summer school should be practically free. A state university cannot afford to charge the teachers of its commonwealth for instruction. In Missouri the legislature makes an appropriation for the summer school. This sum we find sometimes insufficient. In that case we charge a fee of \$5 to eke out the expense. Superintendent Maxwell, of greater New York has wisely laid down the principle that no teacher in that city can hope for advance in rank or salary who does not show advance in scholarship, as attested by work well done in approved summer schools. In Missouri, at least, the tide is setting strongly in favor of summer schools as a substitute for teachers institutes, in which some weeks are generally consumed in threshing old straw and in talking about pedagogy. I find by wide experience that while pedagogy is most valuable, what our teachers need most is profounder acquaintance with the subjects they teach.

A state university should maintain extension courses. Experience shows that where the population is sparse and the railroad facilities imperfect, the regular faculty cannot conduct

these courses advantageously. The loss to the students on the campus is greater than the gain by the general public. This is our experience in our own university. But we have begged the legislature—though hitherto in vain—to provide for a staff of extension lecturers who shall travel over Missouri arousing the intellectual activity of people that cannot possibly attend the university. Nine tenths of the people, old enough to receive instruction, are debarred from attending. Why should not the university send instruction to them? Some say the people would substitute this for attendance at the university. Such a result is not probable. The whole tendency of the thing would be to awaken people at their homes to the life intellectual, which would ultimately bring hundreds to the university that otherwise would not have come. I am not inclined to give much credit toward degrees for extension work. The idea should not be held out to people that they can stay at home, follow their ordinary pursuits, do a little extension study, and gain a university education. This would be ignoring the immense value of well-equipped laboratories, museums, and libraries, and the intellectual stimulus that comes from the association upon a campus of a large and learned faculty with hundreds of vigorous students. No extension work can rival residence in a strong university. Nevertheless it seems to me that the state universities owe to the people what instruction can be imparted through extension lectures and traveling libraries. The hope of the university is in the growing intelligence of the whole people. It should aim to spread and to deepen intelligence among all classes, from the cradle to the grave.

In conclusion, a number of smaller agencies might be mentioned for increasing the sympathy between the university and the schools of its state. One of these is an annual convocation of the teachers of the approved high schools on the campus of the university; another is circular letters to the teachers of the high schools on subjects of importance to them; another is strict attention to letters from teachers. Speaking from my own experience, I find that nearly a fourth of my time is occupied in one way or another in working for the schools of Missouri. The

only firm foundation for a state university is the respect and affection of an intelligent people. Salvation lies in lifting the people up to intelligence and in winning their respect and affection. To attain these ends the university should not begrudge time, thought, and money.

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